

CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-64.

65. (currently amended) A process for thermally crystallizing solid polyester polymer pellets in a pipe comprising directing a flow of solid pellets in a liquid medium through a pipe having an aspect ratio L/D of at least 15:1, wherein the solid pellets are crystallized in the pipe at a liquid medium temperature greater than the T_g of the polyester polymer.

66. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pellets are crystallized in said pipe at a liquid medium temperature exceeding the boiling point of the liquid medium at 1 atmosphere.

67. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pellets are crystallized in said pipe at a liquid medium temperature of at least 140°C.

68. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pellets and liquid medium in said pipe are under a pressure equal to or greater than the vapor pressure of the liquid medium.

69. (currently amended) The process of claim 65, ~~further~~ comprising introducing said polyester pellets having a degree of crystallinity of no more than 15% into said pipe.

70. (currently amended) The process of claim 69, comprising introducing said solid pellets having a degree of crystallinity of no more than 10% into said pipe.

71. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pipe has an aspect ratio L/D of at least 25:1, the pellets are crystallized in said pipe at a liquid medium temperature of at least 140°C, the pellets and liquid medium in said pipe are under a pressure equal to or greater than the vapor pressure of the liquid medium, and the pellets .

72. (currently amended) The process of claim 71, comprising introducing said solid pellets having a degree of crystallinity of no more than 15% into said pipe.

73. (original) The process of claim 72, comprising crystallizing said solid pellets in said pipe to a degree of crystallinity of at least 30%.

74. (currently amended) The process of claim 65, comprising introducing said solid polyester pellets having a degree of crystallinity of 15% or less into said pipe and crystallizing said pellets to a degree of crystallinity of at least 30% in said pipe in 10 minutes or less.

75. (original) The process of claim 74, comprising conducting said crystallization in 4 minutes or less.

76. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the pipe is devoid of mechanically rotating paddles, in-line mixers, weirs, or baffles.

77. (original) The process of claim 65, wherein the flow of the liquid medium is in the same direction as the flow of the pellets.